# MACAULAY
# ESSAY ON MILTON

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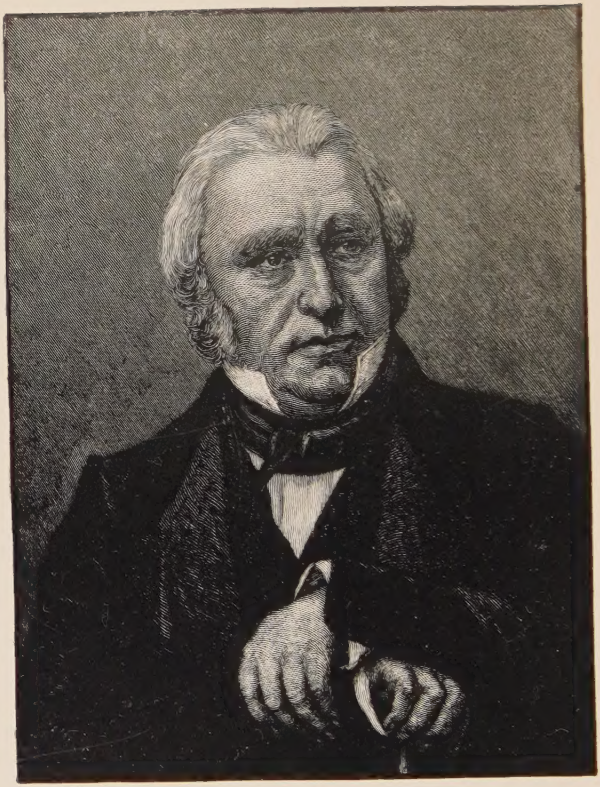

T. B. MACAULAY.

MACAULAY'S

# ESSAY ON MILTON

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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# PREFATORY NOTE.

To Professors Albert S. Cook, of Yale University, and George Lyman Kittredge, of Harvard, the thanks of the editor are due for their kindness in reading the notes to this little text-book while in proof, and for the aid of some timely suggestions and corrections.

# INTRODUCTION.

Two questions confront at the outset the editor who attempts the preparation of a text-book, namely: What is the object of the pursuit of this study? and, By what means may that object be best attained?

English as a requirement for admission to college aims at two things. The first of these is that the pupil shall learn to write good English. The papers submitted at a college entrance examination soon reveal that among these aspirants for scholastic honors and the certificate of a liberal education there is at least a goodly sprinkling of youths whose work may almost be called illiterate. It is not merely feeble in thought and crude in expression; it is misspelled, unpunctuated, slovenly and illegible, and at times downright ungrammatical. No college instructor needs committees and reports to inform him of the presence of such men; but the newspapers and the outside world have lately been awakened to the actual condition of affairs, and the publication of self-condemning samples of undergraduate composition has aided powerfully in the agitation for more attention to English in the colleges and preparatory course. Boys who cannot spell nor write respectably, whose sentences do not parse, and whose written application for a position in a business office would be rejected on its own evidence of the unfitness of the applicant, had better, it is said, spend a little less time in the study of Greek and Latin, and a little more in learning not to violate the ordinary conventionalities and proprieties of expression in their own mother tongue.

But it is easy to say that boys are to be taught to write good English; to teach them that desirable art is a very different matter. For there is no better single test of the intellectual development and capacity of boy or man than his ability to write. If he writes well it is because he thinks well; he can no more write better than he thinks than water can rise above its source. He may, it is true, for a time write worse than he thinks; that is the loss by friction. But let him once conquer the difficulty of an unfamiliar avenue of expression and his writing measures him. If his thought is clear and vigorous, his vocabulary — indication of the range of his intellectual field — varied and under his control, his mind orderly and capable of grasping complex relations, then his style will be good; if, in addition, his imagination is quick and his feeling fine, he will add a higher quality of expression; while if his observation is imperfect, his memory weak, his ideas hazy, his mental processes slow and uncertain, and his grasp feeble, — so long as he is that kind of boy or man, no power on earth, or above it, can teach him to write.

If it is true that good writing means good thinking, if command and power of expression are simply the manifestation of command and power of thought, then the ability to write is the result of all education rather than something to be taught by itself. The justification of the introduction of English into the preparatory school is not at all that by its study boys may learn to write; nor is it a sufficient criticism of the old order of things to say that some college men are illiterate because they were not made to study English at school and pass an examination in English before entering college. If they write badly it is because their whole education was bad, and as a result their present mental development is inferior. If, notwithstanding that fact, they got into college and stay there, the explanation is that

notwithstanding their inferiority they are on the whole above the level at which their institution of learning will send them away. First divisions as a rule write well, no matter what they studied; it is the illiterate, reinforced by the lazy and the bad, who hang on the ragged edge. English — English worthy of the name — is to be taught, if it is to be taught at all, not because it teaches expression, but because it aids development; because the boy who devotes part of his time to the study of English classics is better educated, more mature or well rounded, than the boy who has given all his time to the study of Latin and Greek classics and mathematics.

A separate entrance requirement in English as a test of the candidate's ability to write may, by diverting our attention from the real issue, work positive harm. As a partial recognition of the importance of the ability it is a step in the right direction; but in so far as it implies that this ability is to be tested only by a single examination and developed by a particular line of study, it is altogether misleading. Inability to write is an impeachment of a school, not necessarily of a single master. It is inconceivable that a boy should be able to handle an involved periodic sentence on his Cæsar paper, if he be required, that is, genuinely to translate it, and not merely to give an inaccurate paraphrase, misnamed "free" translation, in which the display of a more or less loose knowledge of the vocabulary enables him to disguise his inability to comprehend the thought and construction — and then go to pieces when put to a fair test — when asked to write about a subject he understands — on his English paper. The pupil who learns to arrange his algebraic solution so that the eye may take in at a glance his process and results, whose demonstrations in geometry train him to be methodical, logical, and exact, is preparing for his English examination while he is master-

ing his mathematics. The truth is — as has already in effect been said — that the demand for better training in writing English in the preparatory schools is simply a demand for better preparation, for minds better disciplined and more fully developed. The logical conclusion is that the test of this must be applied, not in one subject, but in all. If the English test requires a maturity a year beyond that required in other subjects the candidate will not be kept out another year; he will get in — over the ruins of the barrier that the defeated English examiner attempted to defend.

Preparatory school English is in danger of seeking unassisted to accomplish too much. Its scope is so broad, the instruments which it puts into the hands of the skillful teacher are so various, that it may be made the means of disciplining almost any faculty of the mind. Through the opportunities which it affords for linguistic, rhetorical, and literary training, its study might almost answer for a universal education. But that it must not attempt. It must limit its field; it must seek out as its peculiar province that part of education which is comparatively neglected by the older studies, and which it is peculiarly qualified to accomplish.

It is to be hoped that it will not long continue to be held in popular opinion responsible for all the shortcomings of schoolboys and college students in the matter of written expression. Every preparatory school teacher must teach that — is teaching it all the time, whether efficiently or otherwise. Every written examination is an exercise in it; every translation influences it. Even the conventions and proprieties of written expression the violation of which constitutes illiteracy must be enforced in all departments if much is to be accomplished. A boy must not be permitted to misspell and ignore punctuation and use bad grammar with one instructor any more than with another.

The object of English as a preparatory study, then, is not to teach unaided and as its peculiar field the ability to write good English, though it has been said that the acquisition of this ability is one of the objects of the examination in English as a college entrance requirement. The other object aimed at by that requirement is that the pupil shall learn to like good books. And here we find the true and proper field of English teaching. Greek and Latin, formerly accepted without question as the peculiar instruments for the acquisition of liberal culture — the studies once called the humanities, have now partly been swamped by the growing importance of modern literature and history, and partly transformed by the influence of German scholarship and the scientific spirit, until they have become mainly the means of mental discipline and grammatical and linguistic drill. Parnassus is now climbed for the resulting benefit to muscles and sinews and lungs, and the ancient Pegasus labors among the dray-horses. It is the mantle fallen from the classics which English is now privileged to take up. To awaken and train a taste for good literature, to develop the æsthetic side of the youth, to sow the seeds of what may ripen into refinement and elegance and culture — here is the opportunity for English, and herein its high claim to a place in the established curriculum. Whether or no it can do this work better than the classics, were they taught by men of elegant scholarship and culture with this end in view, it is unnecessary to inquire. They are not ordinarily so taught; they do not attempt the work; and it is well to try English in their place.

How shall we teach boys to like good books? How educate and refine their taste? How teach culture? Knowledge can be taught; but culture? Appreciation, say some of our critics, is inborn; denied to some; in others a germ late fertilized, giving no sign of life until school days

are long past. Is not sensibility to beauty like sensibility to color, a matter of natural endowment?

It must be admitted that in the average schoolboy the æsthetic side of his nature is not highly developed. An English classic was defined at a recent meeting of teachers in New England as a work which the ordinary schoolboy will read with pleasure, and never forget. If by this is meant that he will attain to this laudable result unaided, either the commonly accepted list of English classics must suffer some wonderful expurgations or the ordinary schoolboy does not get to college. The writer does not recognize the type. He will frankly admit his inability in the case of a considerable part of a college Sophomore class to make them carry away anything more than an intellectual comprehension of *L'Allegro* — and even that impression so little permanent as to invest with substantial terrors for some of them the prospect of an examination six months away. It is not very difficult to interest college underclassmen in the *Faerie Queene;* but it is ordinarily for the story or the allegory rather than the Spenserian beauty of the language or the melody of the verse. Perhaps most of the boys who read the *Ancient Mariner* for the entrance examination were moved with a genuine appreciation of its poetry; but their papers would enrich a jest-book. It is idle to shut our eyes to the fact that intellectual curiosity and moral enthusiasm usually precede in the process of development the faculty of æsthetic appreciation.

The first and greatest obstacle in the way of the schoolboy's appreciation of literary style is the failure to comprehend the thought in all its fullness and suggestiveness. A happy epithet or poetic phrase must be caught by the eye and flashed through the mind before it can kindle the imagination. Rapid and superficial reading, mainly of fiction, and the diffuse abundance of the newspaper columns

have done their work, and the boy grasps mainly the nouns and verbs, taking in the main idea sufficiently to preserve the thread of the narrative, but without receiving any impression from the lesser words that contain the color and clothe the thought in beauty. Moreover, the artistic effectiveness of language is due not merely to what it directly says, but also to what it suggests. All words grow richer for us every day, from strengthened associations and the perception of a deeper meaning. The boy with his narrow experience and little depth of thought, finding it sufficiently difficult to grasp the first meaning, the denotation of the word, has neither mental energy nor richness of feeling to find more than a small part of what to the mature mind is really there.

As the deficiency is primarily an intellectual one, so the remedy is to be found in stimulating intellectual activity. The avenue to the feelings is through the chambers of the mind, whose doors are closed and barred. But rightly touched, they open easily enough. Curiosity is as natural to the healthy boy's mind as hunger to his body. Æsthetic feeling, it is true, we cannot directly teach; we cannot make the blind see; but we may draw the curtains from the window and bid the child look out. Most boys have not had their eyes opened, that is all.

English in the schools is a subject to be studied, not read merely. The average schoolboy is incapable undirected of reading aright. He must learn a new method. He must try so far as possible to notice every word, to follow out every allusion, to leave nothing behind him that he does not understand. There is, of course, the danger that under a wooden and injudicious teacher the work may become mechanical and irksome; but in no subject is there less excuse for this than in English. Dull work is hard work; but hard work need not be dull. The teacher who cannot

get more work and more willing work and more effective work out of his pupils in English than in anything else has mistaken his profession.

English is the study above all others which must set the pupil to thinking. Thoughtfulness one would expect to find the supreme and distinguishing characteristic of a college community. The thoughtful attitude of mind may in a sense be called the test of a liberal education. Yet it is astonishing how many men live for four years within college walls and receive their degrees at the end who have never learned to think for themselves, and how little it is true that the college atmosphere is necessarily a thoughtful atmosphere. Opinions are too often the result of environment, of inherited principles and prejudices, credulously accepted and blindly defended. Many men are afraid to think; it is uncomfortable business, and leads no one knows whither; better rest satisfied with the opinions and principles and beliefs of other good respectable people; otherwise you will probably become a crank. Now if a man has not attained to the thoughtful attitude of mind — has not learned to observe and ponder and judge for himself, and to be fond of thinking, before he leaves college, it is not likely that he will ever learn afterward. But it is not necessary that he should wait until he gets to college before he begins to learn. The boy who is interested in books and reads along general lines will grow into the thoughtful, the broadly and truly educated man. The teacher who makes his pupils thoughtful confers upon them the greatest benefit in the teacher's power to bestow. And what for this purpose can compare with English in the opportunity that it gives? It is the gateway to a whole new world — the world of ideas, the world in which one escapes from pettiness, and vulgarity, and prejudice, and enters the freemasonry of high and noble society. Not

that it is by any means the only gateway; but the preparatory school teacher of English is dealing more directly with thought in its application to life, and with far greater variety and range of thought, than the teacher of any other subject. Literature covers the whole range of unspecialized human activity. Its field is nature and life. Novels, essays, poems to be taught, their thought to be made the thought of the pupil, and all the wealth of illustration and figure and suggestion to be explored — how can literature be taught without teaching the pupil to think?

The experienced and skillful master will need no directions how to make effective a subject so rich with opportunity. But the introduction of English into the college requirements is so recent that it has not found a method agreed upon in general outline by all teachers; each must find his way for himself, and often lose precious time in experiment. There is a danger which confronts editor and teacher alike. It is that he may do too much of the work which the pupil, if he is to receive the benefit, must do himself. If the pupil is to learn to think he must form opinions, not learn them. At every step, it is true, questions rise before him which he cannot settle definitely and finally for himself for years; perhaps can never settle; yet he ought to be thinking about them. His curiosity is continually to be stimulated and awakened, not satisfied and put to sleep. He should be taught the use of books of reference, too, that he may not be helpless when reading by himself with texts unannotated for the convenience of laziness and an examination cram. And on the other hand, it is unnecessary to discuss the question whether it would be profitable to require the pupil to hunt down every allusion for himself, since it is manifestly impossible for him to do so and cover the ground which the college entrance requirement demands. His master or his notes

must often tell him what he needs to know to understand his text, not merely tell him where to look to find that knowledge for himself.

It has been the editor's effort in preparing this little pamphlet to keep in view the practical necessities of the case, while at the same time avoiding the Charybdis of that most detestable of pseudo-educational works — a device for enabling pupils to cram sufficient unassimilated knowledge to enable them, with the smallest possible expenditure of energy and time, to pass a given examination. Much has been left for the boy or girl to do, and much for the discretion of the teacher to select, expand, or omit. There is no pretence of having exhausted the possibilities of the essay: it has been attempted only to suggest some of the ways in which it may be employed for the kind of teaching which the requirement of English for the college entrance examinations was intended to demand.

YALE UNIVERSITY,
March, 1896.

# LIFE OF MACAULAY.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY was born at the home of his father's brother-in-law, Thomas Babington, at Rothley, in Leicestershire, on Oct. 25, 1800. His early home was in the suburbs of London. His father, the son of a Scotch minister, had lived for some years in the British West Indies. Having learned from practical experience what slavery meant, he resigned the lucrative position which his abilities had won, and returned to England to join the little band of devoted philanthropists who were fighting to put an end to the slave-trade, and to abolish slavery in the English dependencies. Macaulay was his oldest child.

The boy gave early evidence of unusual powers. From the age of three years he was a voracious reader; before he was eight he began to amuse himself with such literary labors as the composition of epic and narrative poems, hymns, epitomes of history, arguments for Christianity. To a wonderfully exact and ready memory was joined intellectual restlessness and imaginative activity. His productions were of course worthless as literature, but they show the bent of the child's mind. He talked the language of books; the world in which he lived was quite apart from that of the ordinary schoolboy.

In the outdoor sports and games of schoolboys he was never proficient. "He could neither swim, nor row, nor drive, nor skate, nor shoot." To the end of his life he remained one of the clumsiest of men. His gloves never

fitted; his clothes were ill put on; he could not strop a razor, and when he shaved he usually cut himself. Even with this physical awkwardness he might in a large school have been drawn into the life around him. But his preparation for the university was at small private schools, so that he was never really a boy among boys. He was not unpopular, but he cared little for anything but reading; in this his activity was prodigious. He read with great rapidity, and yet accurately; and the power of his memory is almost incredible. He could repeat long poems word for word after a single reading; he knew *Paradise Lost* and *Pilgrim's Progress* by heart. Forty years later he recalled and recited two worthless newspaper poems which he had happened to read one day while waiting in a coffee-room, and had never thought of in the interval.

On his entrance upon university life, which was at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1818, the social side of the greatest talker of his generation began to develop. Macaulay had never been a mere bookworm; even at school he had been distinguished for the vehemence and self-confidence of his conversation, and the pleasure he took in it; and contemporary politics had always had the keenest interest for him. At his father's house he had been accustomed to hear public affairs discussed by men of distinguished ability, who were themselves intimately concerned in them, and who were at the same time actuated only by high and unselfish motives, moral earnestness, and devotion to duty. In this school Macaulay had received his early training, and he never forgot its principles. Important questions were now pressing forward in English politics. Hostility to the excesses of the French Revolution and the struggle against Napoleon had given a lease of life to British conservatism which was now nearly run out. Roman Catholics were still disqualified from holding office; Parliament was unrepresentative and

under the control of the landowners — the aristocracy; grain was kept dear in the interests of a class, by unjust taxation. But the agitation for reforms had already begun. And in literature and religion as well a liberalizing spirit was at work. Everywhere new ideas were in conflict with old forms — the nineteenth century against the eighteenth. Surrounded as he was by a society of brilliant contemporaries, and in the ferment of the new life which was working in the universities, Macaulay, with his well-stored mind and his exhaustless intellectual energy, found here opportunity for the free play and full expansion of his powers. Macaulay was eminently a sociable man. He loved to talk almost as well as he loved to read. He could talk all day and all night. No hour which found him a listener was ever too late; and if his companion wished his share of the time, they both talked at once. It was not until many years later that he acquired the habit of intermittent "flashes of silence," which Sydney Smith noted as so delightful. His extraordinary fertility of mind and readiness of memory made him incomparable. He was never at a loss for an argument. Everything that he had ever read seemed at the end of his tongue; his mind could range in an instant through his vast storehouse of information, and bring to the front whatever bore on the question in hand. If he wished to illustrate the use of a word, he seemed to be able to quote offhand every passage containing that word which he had ever read, — it made no difference whether it was Latin, Greek, or English. It was no wonder that a man of such powers should have won for himself a foremost place as a conversationalist and an orator, as well as in literature.

His career at the university was signalized by the academic honors which he won. His scholarship, it is true, was not of the kind which loves to delve in details or range about abstractions. He disliked and neglected mathematics, and

he defined a scholar as one who reads Plato with his feet on the fender. But in 1821 he proved the quality of his classical attainments by carrying off a Craven scholarship, and twice he won the Chancellor's medal for English verse. Finally, in 1824, he was elected, after the usual competitive examination, one of the Fellows of his college.

His first distinguished literary success was in 1825, and it was obtained by the publication of the Essay on Milton. Already he had begun to appear in print, having contributed a number of articles and some verse to a newly started and short-lived London quarterly. But the *Edinburgh Review*, which printed the Essay on Milton, was the most important periodical in the country. The Essay was immediately recognized as the work of a new and brilliant writer, and Macaulay became a regular contributor to the *Review*. At the same time he was pursuing the study of the law, though with little interest and no expectation of making it seriously his profession. It is said that "he never really applied himself to any pursuit that was against the grain," and the law was not to his taste. But politics were; and in 1830 he entered the House of Commons as member for Calne.

For the next seventeen years literature held only a second place in his thoughts. His speeches on the Reform Bill in 1831 placed him at once in the front rank of parliamentary orators, and contributed largely to the success of the measure. Had he been free to follow the bent of his own inclinations, he might perhaps have risen to a position second to none of the great leaders of his party. But his poverty hampered him. His father's business, good when Macaulay entered the university, had gone from bad to worse, until at last there was nothing of it left but debts, which Macaulay most honorably assumed and at last completely paid. His writing could be depended on for a small income, but it drew upon his time. As long as his

party was in power he was sure of office and a salary, but it fettered his independence. At this juncture an opportunity presented itself which enabled him, by banishing himself from England for a few years, to earn a sum sufficient to yield him a comfortable income for the rest of his life. He was appointed a member of the Supreme Council of India, and early in 1834 he left England to enter upon his new duties as one of the five English rulers of a great empire.

The summer of 1838 saw him back in London. In his new-found leisure he began to plan his *History of England.* But his services were too valuable to his party to admit of his remaining in private life. Within a year he was elected to Parliament again as one of the members for Edinburgh, and soon after was taken into the Cabinet as Secretary of War. Macaulay was an ardent Whig, and always ready to do battle for his party. He was soon relieved from the cares of office, however, by the success of the Tories in 1841, and though he continued to sit as one of the representatives of Edinburgh, he was for the most part free to press forward the preparation of his greatest work. Five years later he again held office for a short time, but in the elections of 1847 he lost his seat in Parliament, and withdrew from public life. In 1852 he refused a place in the Cabinet; and though, in the same year, yielding to the wishes of his former constituents at Edinburgh, who were anxious to make amends for his earlier defeat and were proud of so distinguished a representative, he again entered Parliament, he never afterwards took a prominent part in the country's business. All his strength was given to the History.

In 1848 the first two volumes appeared. Its success was unprecedented. Macaulay had proposed to himself to write a work which should "supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies." The History proved to be the most popular book of its generation, both in England

and America. In his own country three thousand copies went in ten days, — a record surpassing anything since Waverley, nearly forty years before ; and four months later a New York publisher informed Macaulay that there were six editions on the market, with probably sixty thousand copies sold, adding, "No work, of any kind, has ever so completely taken our whole country by storm." The next two volumes, published in 1855, were still more popular. Within three months his publishers paid him £20,000 in a single check. With pecuniary reward came also the honors that belonged to the first English historian of his day. In 1849 he had declined the professorship of modern history at Cambridge. In 1853 he was elected a foreign member of the Institute of France, and the king of Prussia named him a knight of the Order of Merit. Learned societies all over Europe made him of their number ; he held high offices at the universities of Glasgow and Cambridge ; and in 1857 he was elevated to the peerage, as Baron Macaulay of Rothley.

Not content with making himself the most popular and influential essayist and historian of his time, Lord Macaulay had aspired also to the poet's laurels. In 1842 he had published his well-known *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Full of fire and spirit, of rapid movement, vigor, and stateliness, they are as characteristic of their author as are his speeches or his History. Macaulay was not a poet of the kind of the greatest poets of our century. His imagination was rather historic than poetic ; one of the tenderest-hearted of men, his feeling was social and sympathetic rather than lyric and impassioned ; his delight was in objective activity, not in the companionship of his own moods ; he loved the life of men better than the life of nature ; he was not an instinctive master of the secrets of the human heart. But he had the power of making the past seem present to him. He moved in other days or lands as easily as his own ; London became

at will the London of Queen Anne or the capital of the Cæsars. He could reconstruct, from the material which his great reading supplied, all the life and color and movement of generations dead and gone. The *Lays of Ancient Rome* are not mere rhetoric in verse; they move us like martial music and the tread of marching men; they are genuine poetry, though not of the kind which our age values most.

Lord Macaulay's life had always been intense. "When I do sit down to work," he said of himself, "I work harder and faster than any person that I ever knew"; and he played as hard as he worked. His tremendous intellectual energy, always active, and always applying itself in powerfully concentrated effort, had begun to wear out his body. In 1852 had developed serious trouble with his heart, and he never regained perfect health. As the History progressed, he applied himself to his task with increasing difficulty; after the publication of the second instalment his waning strength compelled him to resign his seat in Parliament; the fifth volume he did not live to see in print. Toward the close of the year 1859 his weakness grew upon him, and on December 28th death came, suddenly but painlessly, as he sat in his easy chair with open book beside him. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, near to Johnson and Addison, — the great representative prose writer of the first half of the nineteenth century beside the two great essayists of the eighteenth.

The most conspicuous trait in Macaulay's character, the trait which appears in all that he did, is his vigor, his energy of intellect. He is a kind of nineteenth-century Dr. Johnson, made fit for the drawing-room. But where Johnson was lazy, he was active; where Johnson was melancholy, he was cheerful; where Johnson was weak, he was strong. His exhaustless capacity for work, his incessant intellectual

activity, — he read with impartial avidity everything from the hardest Greek tragedy to the last bad novel, — his wonderful powers of memory, his brilliant conversation, his diversified interests and varied literary production, all attest the same trait. He wasted on trifles the intellectual force of half a dozen ordinary brains.

It is not strange that such a man should have been one of the most forcible writers that ever held a pen. Every sentence is crisp, clear, and strong. The boy or girl who studies Macaulay's style is taking a composition tonic. It is the best remedy that can be prescribed for the diffuseness and inaccuracy of thought, loose and ineffective sentence-structure, and feeble use of words, that beset the average untrained writer. Clearness and force in thinking, speaking, and writing are the qualities best worth cultivating. "The first rule of all writing," said Macaulay, "that rule to which every other is subordinate, is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and precisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers." It is a rule which we may well make our motto. The teacher who makes the best use of Macaulay will not fail to direct continual attention to the style.

# MILTON.

(*EDINBURGH REVIEW, AUGUST, 1825.*)

*Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrinâ Christianâ libri duo posthumi.* A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON, translated from the Original by Charles R. Sumner, M.A., etc., etc.: 1825.

TOWARD the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, deputy keeper of the state-papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton while he filled the office of Secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish Trials and the Rye-house Plot. The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, superscribed *To Mr. Skinner, Merchant.* On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long lost essay on the doctrines of Christianity, which, according to Wood and Toland, Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the suspicions of the Government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet.

Mr. Sumner, who was commanded by his majesty to edit and translate the treatise, has acquitted himself of his task in a manner honorable to his talents and to his character. His version is not indeed very easy or elegant; but it is entitled to the praise of clearness and fidelity. His notes abound with interesting quotations, and have the rare merit of really elucidating the text. The preface is evidently the work of a sensible and candid man, firm in his own religious opinions, and tolerant toward those of others.

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. It is, like all his Latin works, well written, though not exactly in the style of the prize essays of Oxford and Cambridge. There is no elaborate imitation of classical antiquity, no scrupulous purity, none of the ceremonial cleanness which characterizes the diction of our academical Pharisees. The author does not attempt to polish and brighten his composition into the Ciceronian gloss and brilliancy. He does not, in short, sacrifice sense and spirit to pedantic refinements. The nature of his subject compelled him to use many words

"That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp."

But he writes with as much ease and freedom as if Latin were his mother-tongue; and, where he is least happy, his failure seems to rise from the carelessness of a native, not from the ignorance of a foreigner. We may apply to him what Denham with great felicity says of Cowley. He wears the garb, but not the clothes, of the ancients.

Throughout the volume are discernible the traces of a powerful and independent mind, emancipated from the influence of authority, and devoted to the search of truth. Milton professes to form his system from the Bible alone; and his digest of Scriptural texts is certainly among the

best that have appeared. But he is not always so happy in his inferences as in his citations.

Some of the heterodox doctrines which he avows seemed to have excited considerable amazement, particularly his Arianism, and his theory on the subject of polygamy. Yet we can scarcely conceive that any person could have read the *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of the former; nor do we think that any reader acquainted with the history of his life ought to be much startled at the latter. The opinions which he has expressed respecting the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise.

But we will not go into the discussion of these points. The book, were it far more orthodox or far more heretical than it is, would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted or perverted by quartos. A few more days, and this essay will follow the *Defensio Populi* to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be withdrawn, to make room for the forthcoming novelties.

We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint till they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him — a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to

take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known: and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilized world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works, they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilization, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction, and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions in consideration of these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavorable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson

has thought fit to make him the butt of much clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilization which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we fervently admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilized age. We cannot understand why those who believe in that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phenomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits that hoard, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs. Marcet's little

dialogues on political economy could teach Montague or Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The progress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations, of a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalization is necessary to the advancement of knowledge: but particularity is indispensable to the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyze human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury; he may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius; or he may never think about the matter at all. His creed on such subjects will no

more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lachrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe, or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakspeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the Fable of the Bees. But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man — a real, living, individual man?

Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigor and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled:

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

These are the fruits of the "fine frenzy" which he ascribes to the poet — a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is

the truth of madness. The reasonings are just; but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, everything ought to be consistent; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence of all people children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by *Hamlet* or *Lear* as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet, in spite of her knowledge, she believes; she weeps; she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek rhapsodists, according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-

knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilized community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hinderance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigor and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labor, and long meditation employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education: he was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language in modern Europe from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination: nor, indeed, do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the Middle Ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill qualified to judge between two Latin styles as an habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks. That the author of the *Paradise Lost* should have written the epistle to Manso was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, his genius gives to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings

of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:

> "About him exercised heroic games
> The unarmed youth of heaven. But o'er their heads
> Celestial armory, shield, helm, and spear,
> Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold."

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt anything like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal and no parodist to degrade; which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests;

not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the *Iliad*. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door that obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame." The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the *Paradise Lost* is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations, we may remark that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known or more frequently repeated than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamored knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as ottar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close-packed essence from the thin, diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.

The *Comus* and the *Samson Agonistes* are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition

so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newbery, in which a single movable head goes round twenty different bodies, so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavored to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek drama, on the model of which the *Samson* was written, sprang from the ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem that they still looked up, with

the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The Book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd; considered as choruses, they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytæmnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the seven Argive chiefs, by the principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity, not of a painting, but of a bass-relief. It suggests a resemblance; but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly, much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides deserved. Indeed, the caresses which this partiality leads our countryman to bestow on "sad Electra's poet" sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairy-land kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the *Samson Agonistes*. Had Milton taken Æschylus for his model, he would have

given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic proprieties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralize each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The *Comus* is framed on the model of the Italian Masque, as the *Samson* is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to *The Faithful Shepherdess*, as *The Faithful Shepherdess* is to the *Aminta*, or the *Aminta* to the *Pastor Fido*. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as

paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the *Comus* to the distinction which he afterward neglected in the *Samson*. He made his *Masque* what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labor of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly,

> "Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly or I can run,"

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe

in the Elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky winds of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the *Paradise Regained*, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of the parental affection which men of letters bear toward the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the *Paradise Lost*, we readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of the *Paradise Lost* to the *Paradise Regained* is not more decided than the superiority of the *Paradise Regained* to every poem which has since made its appearance. Our limits, however, prevent us from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the *Paradise Lost* is the *Divine Comedy*. The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends

less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the color, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the Monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.

Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas: his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs

were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him that three tall Germans would in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translation is not at hand: and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the *Paradise Lost* with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery — Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance, Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable: and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The *Divine Comedy* is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo.

His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver. The author of *Amadis* would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pigmies and giants, flying islands, and philosophizing horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him: and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery is that of attempting to philosophize too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But

these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word, but we have no image of the thing; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words, indeed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colors to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating

desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust. Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars. St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more

easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations, we infer that no poet who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical coloring can produce no illusion when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirit should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts." This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half-belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by

so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque, indeed, beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural agents excite an interest; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and demons without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto-da-fé*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet, austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose

vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso and Klopstock. They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men, but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

Perhaps the gods and demons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character: and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. The legends of Æschylus seem to harmonize less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticos in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favorite gods are those of the elder generation, the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart, the gigantic Titans, and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance

to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture: he is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself.

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, colored by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit; that of Dante by intensity of feeling.

In every line of the *Divine Comedy* we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth nor the hope of heaven, could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness." The gloom of his character discolors all the passions of men, and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness — the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip — and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pander in

the style of a bellman, were now the favorite writers of the Sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of *Comus*, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these that fair Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the *Masque*, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rout of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die.

Hence it was that, though he wrote the *Paradise Lost* at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or

loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament, with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy-land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works; but it is most strongly displayed in the *Sonnets*. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed forever, led him to musings, which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterize these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology, or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

The *Sonnets* are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception,

dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would, indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of spirit so high and of an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes, liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The friends of liberty labored

under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's *History of the Parliament* is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause — Oldmixon, for instance, and Catherine Macaulay — have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candor or by skill. On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of Clarendon, and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned according as the resistance of the people to Charles the First shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall, therefore, make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any gov-

ernment to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage-ground; but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority, that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm that every reason which can be urged in favor of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favor of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and profession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of popery, retained all its worst vices — a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant; but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men, who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential, and

take only what is accidental: they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If in any part of any great example there be anything unsound, these flesh-flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that

> "Their labor must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil."

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights, liberty, security, toleration, all go for nothing with them. One sect there was, which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire there was so unhappily circumstanced, that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America. They stand forth zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right, which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era. The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory.

They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles, or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic, or Frederic the Protestant. On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James the Second was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant Revolution.

But this certainly was not the case; nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's *Abridgment* believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily not to popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic; but they excluded Catholics from the crown because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this, "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this: Had Charles the First broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the

warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the King himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion mention one act of James the Second to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of Parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of Parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate: the right of petition was grossly violated: arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the Parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had been given up. The Star-chamber had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not

retained upon conditions? He too had offered to call a free parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had no doubt passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives; but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another

Parliament; another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut!* Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defense is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him

ror having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man, but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because their privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has labored, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the Scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag: all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of these outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The heads of the Church and State reaped only that which they had sown. The Government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a Northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that when soldiers in such a situation find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but

intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion: and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, scepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces; and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half-blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce; and at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favorite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the King. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still, we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice, more particularly, to the eminent person who defended it,

that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides. We have, throughout, abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The King can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister only ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffreys and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To discharge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace, and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters. When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the fifth of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our King and Governor,

can, on the thirtieth of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy;" but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage: his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father: they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If anything more were wanting to the justification of

Milton, the book of Salmasius would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers, who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the *Æneæ magni dextra*, gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell — his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord

Clarendon. For himself he demanded indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder, or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can

doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honor been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents, sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the policy of the State. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl

round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose: who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spat in his face in 1649; who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated at Westminster Hall and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads, or stuck up oak-branches, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt

of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learned. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

> "Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
> Che mortali perigli in se contiene :
> Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,
> Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene."

Those who roused the people to resistance; who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years; who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen; who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy; who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth — were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles the First, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles the Second was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of

superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on his intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but his favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier

hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged; on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion, the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them.

People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain: not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach; and we know that, in spite of their hatred of popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity, that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans and their

De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candor. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse-boys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favorable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers.

We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their antechambers, and the Janizaries who mount guard at their gates. Our Royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valor, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honor, the prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red-cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues, courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great taskmaster's eye."

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on the Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honor and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as best harmonize with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master, and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated.

He listened to the song of the Sirens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendor, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the *Penseroso*, which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honor. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendor still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship-money and the Star-chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from liberty of the press and the unfettered exercise of private judgment.

These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the King and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

> "Oh, ye mistook! Ye should have snatched his wand
> And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed,
> And backward mutters of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the lady that sits here
> Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system, in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses

than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear, when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapors, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility.

> "Nitor in adversum ; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi."

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with

which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyrical rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyze the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the *Areopagitica* and the nervous rhetoric of the *Iconoclast*, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the *Treatise of Reformation*, and the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word,

the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavor to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can

study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

# NOTES.

# NOTES.

**Page 1.**—l. 6. In 1649, on the establishment of the Commonwealth, the new office of Latin Secretary, or Secretary of Foreign Tongues, was created, and Milton appointed its first occupant. The Popish Trials and Rye-House Plot belong more than thirty years later, after Milton's death and during the reign of Charles II. See Green's *History of the English People*, Bk. VIII. Ch. II.

l. 8. See Milton's sonnets (XXI. and XXII.) to Cyriac Skinner.

l. 17. The dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, in 1683, marked the end of the Popish Trials and the failure of the Whig plan to exclude the Catholic James II. and his children from succession to the throne. It was followed by the Rye-House Plot to assassinate the king.

**Page 2.**—l. 22. See Milton's sonnet XI. A brief extract from the *de Doctrina Christiana*, in which non-classical words or uses are italicized, will serve for an illustration of Macaulay's meaning: "Non ergo [agit] de ea [fide] quae coram hominibus tantummodo *justificat*, cum haec *hypocritica* esse possit: quae utilis, quae vera, quae viva, quae *salvifica* est, ex ea dicit *apostolus* non sola sed ex operibus etiam nos *justificari*."

l. 28.
> "Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
> He did not steal, but emulate!
> And when like them he would appear,
> Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear."
>
> Denham (1615–1668) *On Mr. Abraham Cowley* (1618–1667).

**Page 3.**—l. 5. Arianism denied the doctrine of the Trinity. For a brief summary of Milton's belief as formulated in the *Treatise of Christian Doctrine*, see prefatory memoir of Milton in Masson's 3 vol. edition of his *Poetical Works* (Lond. 1874), pp. lxvii ff.

l. 7. See *Paradise Lost*, VI. 699 ff.; VII. 163 ff.; X. 68 ff.; XI. 20 ff.

"His son of God, though an unspeakably exalted being, is dependent, inferior, not self-existent, and could be merged in the

Father's person or obliterated entirely without the least diminution of Almighty perfection." Richard Garnett, *Life of Milton*, p. 159.

l. 19. The *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* was written by Milton while he was Latin Secretary. It attempted the vindication of the English people for the execution of Charles I. See p. 46, and note on l. 1.

**Page 4.—l. 34.**

"Higher argument
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise
That name, unless an age too late, or cold
Climate, or years, damp my intended wing
Depressed; and much they may if all be mine,
Not hers who brings it nightly to my ear."

*P. L.* Bk. IX. ll. 42–47.

"There prevailed in [Milton's] time an opinion, that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. . . . Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroic poesy." Johnson (1709–1781). Life of Milton, in *Lives of the Poets*.

**Page 5.**—l. 3. A careful comparison of the first part of Dr. Channing's essay on Milton (*Works*, Vol. I.), first published at Boston in 1826, with this portion of Macaulay's essay, may very profitably be made. "He [Milton] had not learned the superficial doctrine of a later day, that poetry flourishes most in an uncultivated soil, and that imagination shapes its brightest visions from the mists of a superstitious age; and he had no dread of accumulating knowledge, lest it should oppress and smother his genius."

l. 8. The argument which occupies the next few pages should be thoroughly analyzed and discussed. First is stated the proposition to be proved; then each paragraph presents a new thought, falling into its logical place in the demonstration. Macaulay's paragraphing deserves careful study. Summarize into a single sentence the gist of each paragraph.

**Page 6.**—l. 1. *Montague*, Charles, Earl of Halifax (1661–1715). See Macaulay's notice of him in his essay on Addison.

l. 2. *Walpole* (1676–1745), father, or son? Macaulay's essay on Horace Walpole discusses both.

l. 12. *Machine*, more properly 'instrument.'

l. 25. The fall of an apple is said to have led Newton to his greatest discovery. Did Newton in that case "look less at in-

dividuals"? Has the advance of modern science been accomplished by the substitution of "vague phrases" for "images"? When we look on the starry sky, do we see less, or more, than the ancients did? Was it because of the rudeness, or the perfection, of the Greek language, that its literature is so great? Are the continually recurring 'Homeric epithets' of the Iliad signs of imagination, or of conventionality?

l. 32. *Shaftesbury* (1671–1713), the third Earl of, the friend of Pope; not to be confounded with his grandfather, so terribly satirized by Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel*.

l. 33. *Helvetius*, Claude Adrian (1715–1771); a Frenchman whose most important work, *de l'Esprit*, was condemned as immoral, and ordered burnt by the hangman. It contended that enlightened selfishness is a sufficient basis for morality — that 'Honesty is the best *policy*.'

**Page 7.**—l. 4. *Niobe;* for what offense were her children slain by Apollo and Diana? Such allusions to classical mythology should always be carefully looked up in a Classical Dictionary. The story is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VI. 146 ff.

*Aurora.* Homer calls her 'rosy-fingered,' 'saffron-robed,' and says that she 'opens the portals of the day.' Why "the *blushes* of his Aurora"?

l. 9. Bernard de Mandeville (1670–1733) tried to show in *The Fable of the Bees* that vice benefits society. The Moral is:

> "Then leave complaints: fools only strive
> To make a great an honest hive.
>
> * * * * * * * *
>
> So vice is beneficial found,
> When it's by justice lopped and bound."

The contemporaries Mandeville and Shaftesbury (see above, l. 7) represent the two extremes of popular philosophy in their day. For an interesting account of the views of both, see the essays on the two in Leslie Stephen's *Essays on Freethinking and Plainspeaking*.

l. 20. Discuss thoroughly Macaulay's definition of poetry. Wordsworth calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," and "the image of man and nature"; Arnold, "a criticism of life." Coleridge says: "High poetry is the translation of reality into the ideal. . . . The poet is an historian, upon condition of moral power being the only thing in the Universe."

(*Lecture on Milton.*) Channing says in his essay on Milton: "In many poems there is more of truth than in many histories and philosophic theories. The fictions of genius are often the sublimest verities. . . . It is not true that the poet paints a life which does not exist." References for further reading are: Cook's *Sidney's Defense of Poesy;* Matthew Arnold, *The Study of Poetry* (Essays in Criticism, 2nd Series); Stedman, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry;* Wordsworth, *Of the Principles of Poetry and the 'Lyrical Ballads';* Cook, *The Art of Poetry.*

**ll. 28–31.** *Midsummer Night's Dream*, V. i.

**Page 8.**—**l. 1.** "[Poetry's] object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative." Wordsworth, *Principles of Poetry.*

**l. 32.** In Plato's dialogue of *Ion* P. 533, D: 534 (Jowett trans., pp. 501, 502): "The gift which you possess of speaking excellently about Homer is not an art, but, as I was just saying, an inspiration; there is a divinity moving you." But the 'inspiration' is only that which is claimed for the poet. "And as the Corybantian revelers, when they dance, are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets . . .; but when falling under the power of music and metre, they are inspired and possessed." Macaulay's statement lacks accuracy.

**Page 9.**—**l. 24.** "In an intellectual nature, framed for progress and for higher modes of being, there must be creative energies, powers of original and ever-growing thought; and poetry is the form in which these energies are chiefly manifested." Channing.

**Page 10.**—**l. 4.** *Rabbinical literature*, the writings of the Hebrew masters of the law and teachers, or 'rabbis.'

**l. 10.** *Petrarch* (1304–1374), an Italian poet, whose lyrics in praise of his love Laura constitute his greatest claim to immortality.

**l. 13.** *Cowley*, see p. 14, l. 28.

**l. 18.** *Augustan*, see dictionary.

**l. 28.** *Epistle to Manso*, written while Milton was in Italy, 1638.

**Page 11.**—**ll. 4–7.** *P. L.* IV. 551–554.

**Page 12.**—**l. 29.** See Arabian Nights, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.*

**l. 32.** Dryden's opera, *The State of Innocence and the Fall of Man*, was a dramatization of *P. L.*

**Page 13.**—**l. 8.** There is here a personal touch of a feeling peculiarly strong in Macaulay. "Nothing caused him so much pleasure . . . as a visit to any scene that he had known in his earlier years." Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay.*

l. 31. *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* were among the earliest of Milton's poems; *Samson Agonistes* was his very latest.

**Page 14.**—l. 15. *Harold*, the hero of Byron's *Childe Harold*.

l. 28. Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.), Sophocles (495–405 B.C.), and Euripides (480–406 B.C.), were the three great writers of Greek tragedy.

**Page 15.**—l. 10. *Clytemnestra to Agamemnon*, in Aeschylus's tragedy of *Agamemnon; description of the seven Argive chiefs*, from his *Seven against Thebes*.

l. 29. "*sad Electra's poet*" (see Milton, *Sonnet VIII.*), Euripides. That this passage does not represent Macaulay's mature judgment may be seen from the marginal notes penciled in his copy of the Greek tragedians. "I can hardly account for the contempt which, at school and college, I felt for Euripides. I own that I like him now better than Sophocles." And in a letter to Ellis from India in 1835: "I could not bear Euripides at college. I now read my recantation. He has faults, undoubtedly. But what a poet!"

l. 30. See *Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. 1.

**Page 16.**—l. 18. *Masque*, see Century Dictionary. At the time when Comus was written the Masque as a form of private theatrical for festive and ceremonial celebrations was at the height of its popularity in England. The greatest poets and composers of the day were called upon for words and music, prodigious sums were lavished on rich costumes and elaborate stage machinery, and the highest personages, including even the king himself, took part in the presentations. For a detailed account of the most celebrated, sumptuous, and expensive of them all, given at Court by the lawyers of the Four Inns, at the enormous total cost of £21,000 for a single acting, see Masson's *Life of Milton*, Vol. I. pp. 579–587.

l. 21. *Faithful Shepherdess*, by John Fletcher, a contemporary of Shakespeare. The *Aminta* and *Pastor Fido* are Italian pastoral dramas, by Tasso (1544–1595) and Guarini (1537–1612) respectively.

**Page 17.**—l. 1. It is an old custom for the London chimney-sweeps to celebrate May-day with a special parade, in fantastic dresses.

l. 19. *Letter to Milton*, prefixed to *Comus* in Masson's 3 vol. ed. of Milton's *Poetical Works*, p. 167.

l. 21. Theocritus, first and greatest of pastoral poets, wrote in the Doric dialect of Greek. Hence the word Doric connotes both the subject matter of nature poetry and the style of the Greek pastoral.

"Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and hills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay."

*Lycidas*, ll. 186–189.

l. 28. *His own good Genius*, the Attendant Spirit in *Comus*.

l. 32. *Comus*, ll. 1012–1013.

l. 34 ff. Find in *Comus* 976 ff. the original of each phrase in these four lines of Macaulay.

**Page 18.**—l. 22. A full appreciation of Macaulay's prolonged comparison of Dante and Milton can be gained only by an acquaintance with the works referred to. Such an acquaintance is well worth making. Dante was the greatest poet of mediæval, as Milton of modern, Christianity. The standard translations of Dante are, in poetry Cary's, Dean Plumptre's, and Longfellow's, and in prose Charles Eliot Norton's. Both Longfellow's and Plumptre's are line-for-line translations. For the benefit of those who will verify in either of these the successive references, the following notes quote, so far as possible, the line as well as the canto of each allusion.

l. 30. In the Egyptian hieroglyphics each picture was used as an arbitrary symbol something like the character of an alphabet, not, as in other picture-writing, to denote the thing represented; *e.g.*, a calf stood for the syllable Au; a heron, for Ba.

**Page 19.**—l. 14. *Inferno* XII. 4–10.

l. 17. *Ibid.* XVI. 94–104.

l. 18. *Ibid.* IX. 112–116.

l. 25. *P. L.* I. 194–209.

l. 28. *Ibid.* IV. 987–988.

l. 30. *Teneriffe*, a volcano in the Canaries; *Atlas*, a mass of mountains in Northern Africa. What classical myth was connected with the latter?

l. 33. *Inf.* XXI. 58–64.

**Page 20.**—l. 9. *P. L.* XI. 477–493.

l. 16. *Inf.* XXIX. 46–51.

l. 29. *Ibid.* I. 117.

l. 31. *Ibid.* III. 9.

l. 32. *Ibid.* IX. 52–60.

l. 33. *Ibid.* XXI.

**Page 21.**—l. 1. *Ibid.* XXXIV. 70–80.

l 2. *Purgatorio*, the second of the three divisions of the *Divina Commedia*, describes the gradual ascent of the Mount of Purgatory.

l. 3. *Purg.* IX. 112–114.

l. 10. *Amadis*, a common name for the heroes of chivalry romance. The earliest and most famous of the Amadis romances was the *Amadis of Gaul*, probably originally Portuguese of the thirteenth century. Its translations and imitations enjoyed the widest popularity throughout Europe, until the inimitable satire of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, early in the seventeenth century, struck the death-blow to the exaggerations and extravagances of the entire class.

l. 33. "Another inconvenience of Milton's design is that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits." Johnson, *Life of Milton*. Johnson's is the greatest of the "eminent names" alluded to.

**Page 23.** — l. 2. The concreteness of Christianity is not, as one might infer from Macaulay, one of Gibbon's secondary causes of its success. The primary cause, according to Gibbon, was "the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and the ruling providence of its great Author." The secondary causes he recapitulates as follows: "exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of high virtue, and the constitution of the primitive church." *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chap. XV.

l. 15. *Academy*, *Portico*, denote the Platonic and the Stoic schools, respectively, of Greek philosophy.

l. 16. *Fasces of the Lictor*, emblematic of the Roman *imperium*.

l. 20. *St. George*, patron saint of what country?

l. 21. *St. Elmo*, a corruption of Erasmus, who became the patron saint of the Mediterranean sailors. What is "St. Elmo's Fire," and what was it called by the Romans?

l. 23. *Cecilia*, patroness of music, and regarded as the inventor of the organ. She is said to have suffered martyrdom in 230 A.D.

**Page 24.** — l. 34. Matthew Arnold, in *A French Critic on Milton* (*Mixed Essays*), falls foul of Macaulay for this passage, not without excuse. Milton was no juggler with words, attempting to bewilder his reader in a maze of ambiguities. If he was "philosophically in the wrong" it was not of his own choice. Not only did he write in an age of philosophers and theologians, he was himself the greatest English scholar, philosopher, and theologian of his time. His limitations were the limitations of the age in which he lived. Whatever inconsistencies appear, were inevitable in the attempt of the Puritan to reconcile revelation, as he under-

stood it, with reason. The extraordinary influence of *P. L.* on subsequent religious thought was due, not to the obscurity, but to the clearness, of its conceptions; to Milton's skill in reconciling, rather than avoiding, difficulties.

**Page 25.** — l. 24. *Don Juan* asks to supper the ghost of the man he had murdered. The story, originally Spanish, forms the basis of Molière's *Festin de Pierre*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and other versions.

l. 28. *Inf.* X.

l. 32. Dante first saw Beatrice when he was nine years old, and from that time worshiped her with a passionate and ideal devotion, the story of which forms his *Vita Nuova*. (*The New Life*; translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in *Dante and his Circle*, which see.) After Beatrice's death at the age of twenty-four, she gradually became transformed for Dante into the ideal of divine philosophy, the inspiration and centre of his life. "Beatrice is the symbol of Divine Science, of Revelation as distinct from Reason, of Love superior to Skill." J. A. Symonds, *An Introduction to the Study of Dante*. As such she meets him in Purgatory, and is his guide through Paradise. The interview referred to is to be found in *Purg.* XXX.

**Page 26.** — l. 8. Canto IV. of Tasso's (1544–1595) *Gerusalemme Liberata*, describing a council of the devils in Hell, may well be compared with the similar passage in *P. L.* (I. 300 ff.). A single illustrative stanza from Hunt's translation (*Jerusalem Delivered*), will bring out Macaulay's meaning:

> "And oh! what strange, what fearful forms were there!
> What death, what terror in their eyeballs glare!
> Some stamped with brutal hoofs the burning ground,
> And showed a human head, with serpents crowned,
> And as their monstrous tails behind them rolled,
> Lashed the redundant lengths, and twined in many a fold."

l. 9. *Klopstock* (1724–1803), in his *Messias*, Canto II.

l. 14. See p. 15, and note on p. 14, l. 28.

ll. 24–25. What gods are referred to?

l. 27. None of the gods of Hindostan are ordinarily represented as seven-headed. Vishnu, however, is often represented as seated on a seven-headed serpent.

l. 32. For the story of Prometheus see Gayley's *Classic Myths*.

**Page 27.** — l. 27. *Those modern beggars for fame.* Cf. Macaulay's essay on *Moore's Life of Lord Byron*. "[Byron]

always describes himself as a man of the same kind with his favorite creations, as a man whose heart had been withered, whose capacity for happiness was gone and could not be restored, but whose invincible spirit dared the worst that could befall him, here or hereafter. . . .

"There can be no doubt that this remarkable man owed the vast influence which he exercised over his contemporaries at least as much to his gloomy egotism as to the real power of his poetry."

**Page 28.** — l. 10. Both Sardinian and Corsican honey is alluded to by Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and other Latin writers, as bitter. This bitterness was supposed to be due to certain *flowers* on which the bees fed in those islands (Pliny, H. N. 30, 4), but that this bitterness came from the *soil* seems to be Macaulay's addition to the story.

l. 13. Job X. 22.

l. 24. To call Milton a 'lover' is, it must be admitted, to strain the term, though to call him 'unfortunate' in love is to put it mildly. He was thirty-four when he married his first wife, Mary Powell, and just twice her age, and she deserted him almost as suddenly as he had married her. His second wife, indeed, he tenderly loved, though he never saw her, and lost her fifteen months after their marriage. But to compare anything in Milton's experience with Dante's worship of Beatrice is to lose sight of the truth under the temptation of a rhetorical opportunity.

l. 33. Literature was, it is true, at a very low ebb in England during the last years of Milton's life, but Macaulay's denunciation is indiscriminate. Dryden's is not a name to be dismissed with such a line as this, and it was during just these years that Dryden was rising to undisputed eminence in popular and royal favor.

**Page 29.** — l. 16. That Macaulay's panegyric of Milton has not been suffered to stand in all points unchallenged, the following extract from Matthew Arnold's *A French Critic on Milton* (*Mixed Essays*) may testify: "And Milton's temper! His 'sedate and majestic patience'! his freedom from 'asperity'! If there is a defect which, above all others, is signal in Milton, which injures him even intellectually, which limits him as a poet, it is the defect common to him with the whole Puritan party to which he belonged, — the fatal defect of *temper*. He and they have a thousand merits, but they are *unamiable*. Excuse them how one will, Milton's asperity and acerbity, his want of sweetness of temper, of the Shakespearian largeness and indulgence, are undeniable."

But this as a corrective of Macaulay's passage is, after all, no nearer the truth than Macaulay himself. It is true that Milton's prose writings abundantly justify Mr. Arnold's 'asperity,' 'acerbity,' 'want of sweetness of temper.' But there is also evidence to justify the statement that Milton's "was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful." The truth is, that we must distinguish between Milton, the controversialist and partisan, and Milton, the poet and man. Mr. Arnold has in mind the first, Macaulay the second. Milton lived in a time of controversy, of violence, of fierce passions, of civil war; he himself bore a principal part in the fight; and tolerance, indulgence, Shakespearian largeness and sweetness of temper, are not the virtues of such a time. But when to private affliction had been added public calamity, when, with his property swept away, his children undutiful, his eyesight gone, and his body racked with a painful disease, he turned in old age to the composition of the poem which he had planned in his youth, we find that Macaulay's words of him are true. It was of him at that time that his daughter said, he was "delightful company, the life of the conversation, and that on account of a flow of subject and an unaffected cheerfulness and civility." "He was a cheerful companion," says another; " . . . his conversation was lively, but with dignity." Certainly here was "a high and majestic patience," "a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful."

l. 26. There is some rhetorical exaggeration here. Masson reckons Milton's income after the Restoration as the equivalent, all told, of about £700 a year at the present time. Previously both his property and his income had been much greater. The Great Fire in London, of 1666, inflicted additional loss.

Page 30.—l. 3. "*His conception of love*," etc. "What we know of Milton's character, in domestic relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt for females, as subordinate and inferior beings. . . . He thought women made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion." Johnson's Life of Milton in *Lives of the English Poets*.

l. 16. *Filicaja* (1642–1707), an Italian writer of patriotic sonnets.

l. 17. *Petrarch*. See note on p. 10, l. 10.

ll. 20–24. Find the sonnets referred to.

Page 31.—l. 15. Oromasdes, or Ormuzd, and Arimanes, or Ahriman, are the spirits of good and of evil, respectively, in the Parsee religion.

**Page 32.**—l. 1. *The lion in the fable. Aesop* (Teubner ed.) 63; *La Fontaine* III. 10. A lion, seeing a picture of a lion conquered by a man, said, "If we lions knew how to paint, you should see us, and more justly, conquerors."

l. 4. *Roundheads*, the Puritans; so called by the Royalists from the close-cropped hair of servants and apprentices.

ll. 6 ff. The authorities here mentioned by Milton are long since out of date, with the exception of Clarendon's History. This still remains unrivaled as a storehouse of facts; but for the general reader Green's *History of the English People* (Vol. III. Chaps. V.–XII.) stands easily first. Disraeli's *Commentaries on Charles I.* now takes the lead as a defense of the royal cause; but never since Carlyle's *Cromwell's Letters* have the Puritans stood in need of champions, or lacked their full share of popular sympathy.

l. 27. Knowledge of the main facts of English history during the reigns of Charles I. and James II. is necessary to an understanding of this part of the essay. References to Green on specific points will be to the *History of the English People.*

**Page 33.**—l. 17. See Green, Vol. III. pp. 138–139; Masson's *Life of Milton*, Vol. I. pp. 673–685.

l. 29. *There is a certain class of men*, the Tories of Macaulay's own day. Macaulay was himself an ardent Whig.

**Page 34.**—l. 8. *P. L.*, I. 164, 165.

l. 14. *One sect*, the Roman Catholics.

l. 16. *One part of the empire*, Ireland.

l. 19. In 1825, the date of Macaulay's essay, measures were being urged to enable the Irish Catholics to vote and hold office. These the extreme Tories bitterly opposed. Macaulay's argument is, that they approve just that portion of William's policy which was most unfortunate and unjust, while advocating a theory of government which denies him any right to the throne. They hold to the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, as their foreign policy to-day shows, though it is under a new name; they deny the principles which only could justify the revolution; but they accept the revolution, not for the blessings which it brought, but for the evil that it did, and try to persuade us that it was this same religious question which was then at issue, — which certainly is not true.

l. 28. *Somers, Shrewsbury*, two of William's ministers.

**Page 35.**—l. 3. *Ferdinand the Catholic.* Ferdinand of Aragon (1452–1516), who married Isabella of Castile. It was under the joint reign of these two sovereigns that Spain was united into a

single kingdom, the Moors driven out, the New World discovered, and the Inquisition introduced.

l. 4. *Frederick the Protestant* (1596-1632), Frederick V., Prince Palatine, for a short time King of Bohemia and the head of the Protestant Princes of Germany.

l. 13. Oliver Goldsmith's (1728–1774) *History of England*, as well as the abridgment of the same work, here referred to, a part of the hack work to which he was forced by poverty.

l. 24. Macaulay does not state the whole case. The resolution was that the King, "having endeavored to subvert the constitution of this kingdom by breaking the original contract between King and People, and by the advice of Jesuits and other wicked people having violated the fundamental laws, and having withdrawn himself out of the kingdom, *has abdicated* the Government, and that the throne is thereby vacant." It was planned to avoid the necessity of just the conclusion that Macaulay draws, in order to win all parties to its support; it was purposely illogical, in order to be politic. The Tory, though denying the right of the nation to depose its king, could support the resolution on the theory that the King's flight constituted a voluntary abdication. Green, IV. pp. 33–34.

**Page 36.**—l. 10. Green, IV. p. 35.

l. 28. *Ship money*, Green, Vol. III. pp. 173–178, 182–183. *Star Chamber*, *Ibid.* III. 147. Charles in his efforts to avoid calling a parliament exhausted every possible expedient to raise revenue. The maritime towns had formerly in time of war furnished ships; this was made a precedent for a general tax of the kingdom in time of peace. The Star Chamber was a court of officers of the crown which usurped the jurisdiction of other courts in order to levy oppressive fines, which went into the royal treasury.

**Page 37.**—l. 8. *The Long Parliament*, Green, III. Chap. VIII. It was called together in 1640, and was not finally dissolved until 1660.

l. 19. The Convention which passed the resolution declaring the throne vacant. The absence of the King made impossible the legal summoning of Parliament.

l. 21. Green, III. 134–137.

**Page 38.**—l. 3. *Le Roi le veut* (the King wishes it), a phrase surviving from Norman times, by which the king's assent to bills in Parliament is signified.

**Page 39.**—l. 6. *Vandyke*, the great portrait painter of the time.

**Page 40.** — l. 11. *Strafford*, Sir Thomas Wentworth, Earl of. See Green, III. 150–157, 196, 200–201, 203.

l. 20. The Fifth-monarchy men believed that the millennium had come, and that it was their duty to overthrow all existing governments to make way for the new one, the monarchy of Jesus, — fifth, because it had been preceded by the four great monarchies, the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman, foretold, according to the common interpretation, in the Book of Daniel.

l. 21. *Agag*, see I. Sam. XV. 33.

**Page 41.** — l. 31. Xeres, or Jeres, an important town of Spain, in the province of Cadiz, noted for its wine-trade. The word *sherry* is derived from the name of the town.

**Page 42.** — l. 17. In *Orlando Furioso*, XLIII. 78 ff.

**Page 44.** — l. 13. Jeffreys was made lord high chancellor by James after the "Bloody Circuit." Green, IV. p. 9.

l. 15. James II. after his flight from England crossed from France to Ireland, supported by French troops, and was there defeated by William in person at the Battle of the Boyne. (Green, IV. p. 51.)

l. 29. William III. was the son of James's oldest sister, and he married Mary, one of James's daughters. The other daughter, Anne, joined William soon after his landing.

l. 32. William landed Nov. 5, 1688.

**Page 45.** — l. 1. Charles I. was beheaded Jan. 30, 1649.

**Page 46.** — l. 1. Salmasius was reputed the greatest scholar of his time. He was employed to defend the memory of Charles, and his *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I.* drew such a crushing and terrible reply from Milton in his *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* that all Europe was amazed, and Salmasius is said to have died of chagrin — an assertion that lacks support.

l. 5. *Aeneid*, X. 830.

l. 32. Notice the frequent examples in the next few pages of Macaulay's fondness for superlatives and sweeping general assertions, which are often pure rhetorical exaggerations, — *e.g.* "the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants" (p. 48, l. 34), "the finest army that Europe had ever seen" (p. 51, l. 15).

l. 34. Not very enthusiastic praise. "It was not thought an ill temperament, and was then generally looked upon as an alteration fit to be more warrantably made, and in a better time." Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, Bk. XIV.

**Page 47.**—l. 12. Bolivar (1783–1830), "the Washington of South America," was the leader of that country in her struggle with Spain for independence.

**Page 48.**—l. 13. The "Instrument of Government" was a kind of provisional constitution drawn up by the Council of State which had been appointed by the short-lived Convention which, in 1653, succeeded the Long Parliament. (Green, III. p. 283.) The "Humble Petition" was addressed by the army to Parliament in 1647, after the close of the war, desiring the settlement of peace and the restoration of constitutional forms of government, and proposing wide reforms. Green, III. 252–253.

**Page 49.**—l. 14. Cf. I. Corinthians, XVI. 22.

l. 16. Belial is literally 'wicked one,' or 'worthless one,' and is not an idol. The scriptural 'sons of Belial' is no more than 'children of darkness.'

**Page 50.**—l. 10. *Dined on calves' heads.* The calf's head was used by the anti-royalists as emblematic of Charles I. There was a Calves' Head Club, which dined annually on the thirtieth of January (the anniversary of the execution of the king), eating calves' heads and toasting the regicides.

l. 11. *Stuck up oak branches.* Charles II. in escaping from England had at one time been concealed for some hours in an oak tree. After the Restoration the oak branch became a symbol of the "Merry Monarch," as he was called, and used to be set up on the twenty-ninth of May, his birth-day and the anniversary of his entrance into London on his return, with festivities similar to those of May-day.

l. 19. *He that runs may read them.* See Habakkuk, II. 2.

**Page 51.**—ll. 8–11. From Tasso's *Ger. Lib.* (*Jerusalem Delivered*), XV. 57. Hoole's translation is as follows:

> "Behold the fatal spring where laughter dwells,
> Dire poison lurking in its secret cells;
> Here let us guard our thoughts, our passions rein,
> And every loose desire in bonds detain."

l. 29. *In the play, Merchant of Venice,* III. 2.

**Page 53.**—l. 29. Sir Henry Vane the younger was one of the Fifth-monarchy men. (See note on p. 40, l. 20.)

l. 30. *Fleetwood,* Cromwell's son-in-law and one of the Parliamentary generals.

**Page 54.** — l. 21. Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, V. i. 14. Sir Artegal typifies Justice.

l. 34. *Dunstan*, St. (925–988), an Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastic, enforced a strict monastic discipline and the celibacy of the clergy. *De Montfort* (1150–1218), father of the English noble of that name, one of the leaders in the persecution of the Albigenses in France. *Dominic*, St. (1170–1221), founder of the Dominicans; a zealous and austere churchman. *Escobar* (1589–1669), a Spanish Jesuit, whose system of casuistry was severely criticised. He thus becomes the type of those who reason to prove that wrong is right.

**Page 55.** — l. 11. *Doubting Thomases*, John XX. 24–29. *Careless Gallios*, Acts XVIII. 17.

l. 17. *Brissotines*, the moderate republicans of the early days of the Revolution, so called from their leader Brissot; better known by their later name of Girondists.

l. 27. *Whitefriars*, a precinct of London, so called from an old church of the Carmelites, or 'White Friars.' Debtors were there exempt from arrest, and in consequence it became the shelter of criminals and desperate characters of every description, within which no officer of the law dared to venture. See Macaulay's *History*, Chap. III.

**Page 56.** — l. 16. Spenser's *Faërie Queene*, I. ii.

**Page 57.** — l. 6. *Conventicle, Gothic cloister*, used by metonymy for Dissenters and Episcopalians. An illustration of Macaulay's concreteness.

l. 13. Slightly changed from the last line of Milton's *Sonnet II.*

l. 33. *The Hero of Homer*, Odysseus. See Gayley's *Classic Myths*, pp. 318–321.

**Page 58.** — l. 10. *Il Penseroso*, ll. 155–166.

l. 18.

> "For naught I did in hate, but all in honor."
> Othello, V. 2.

The simile would be more effective if we were not compelled to remember first of all that Othello was the dupe of Iago, and that Desdemona was wrongfully slain.

l. 33. Milton's *Areopagitica* was a noble and eloquent plea for liberty of the press. It was addressed to the Long Parliament in 1644, in opposition to an ordinance prohibiting the printing of any work without an official license.

**Page 59.** — ll. 14–18. *Comus*, 815–819.

l. 30. *Presbyterian Wolf,—*

> "Help us to save free Conscience from the paw
> Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw."
> *Sonnet XVI.* (*To Cromwell*).

l. 32. *As a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes.* See Ex. XIII. 9; Deut. VI. 8.

**Page 60.**—ll. 28–29. Ovid's *Met.* II. 72. Phoebus to Phaëthon.

**Page 61.**—l. 2. *Field of cloth of gold;* from what historical event does this phrase come?

l. 8. From *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, Bk. II.; one of his five anti-episcopal pamphlets. To the same group belong the *Treatise of Reformation* and the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*, mentioned below.

l. 13. After the execution of Charles a book entitled *Eikon Basilike* (*i.e.* Royal Image) appeared, pretending to be the king's meditations and prayers. Milton's *Eikonoklastes* (Image-Breaker) constituted the reply of the Commonwealth.

**Page 62.**—l. 17. *Boswellism.* James Boswell, Johnson's biographer, fairly worshiped his master.

l. 28. *The Virgin Martyr.* One of Massinger's (1584–1639) plays.

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